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ACCIDENT PREVENTION A YEAR-ROUND JOB

An announcement by John H. Wetzel, Chairman of the U. S. Department of Agriculture Safety Council and Safety Engineer for the Soil Conservation Service. Recorded June 15, 1945. Time: 3 minutes and 32 seconds not including suggested live introduction.

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ANNOUNCER: (LIVE) This is Farm Safety Week. But to tell us about the importance of Farm Safety as a year-round job, here's John H. Wetzel, chairman of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Safety Council. By transcription, Mr. Wetzel.

TRANSCRIPTION:

WETZEL: During these next few minutes while you're listening to me, about ten farm dwellers will be hurt in accidents. This very day, about 45 farm people will die from accidental causes. These figures, from the National Safety Council, give you some idea of the tremendous farm accident toll.

Let's consider economic loss alone. Last year enough time was lost because of farm accidents to have produced 7 bushels of wheat for each of the 137 million persons in the United States. The average time lost actually amounts to about four days for every farmer in the United States. As we consider the importance of food production this year when our farm labor force is at an all-time low, we see that we can ill afford the loss of any of our farm workers.

And the loss doesn't stop with personal injuries. Take fires...Most farm fires are caused by accidents that could have been prevented. On the average one farm fire occurs in this country every 15 minutes...day and night. These fires cost our farm owners more than 90 million dollars each year in actual property damage. The leading causes of these fires have been careless smoking, careless handling of gasoline and kerosene, and the spontaneous ignition of improperly stored farm products and feed supplies. But regardless of the type of accident, whether it's a broken leg, a burned barn or some ruined equipment; farm accidents cost money, time and suffering....And they can be prevented.

I think industry has taught us a valuable lesson. I think we can take a page from their book.

For the last 10 years and more the industrial accident rate has been going down hill. At the same time on the farm front accidents have continued to take their unnecessary toll. Industry has long realized that they must conduct a concentrated safety program for all workers if accidents are to be kept at a minimum. Industry has learned that every penny spent on accident prevention pays dividends many times over in more efficient and more profitable production. That's leaving aside the human suffering...you can't measure that.

Point is that farm accidents can be prevented just as well as in any other industry. But it's not enough to know that the accidents can be halted. Industry can hire safety engineers. But on the farm each farm family has to be its own corps of accident preventers.

But I don't want that statement to scare you out. First thing to do is to take stock of the situation on your farm. Look around for those hazards that may mean your injury tomorrow, if they're not corrected. Then when you find a trouble spot fix it up right away.....Don't wait for that proverbial rainy day.

Each year we have set aside a week devoted to farm safety. Its observance has been endorsed by the Department of Agriculture and by the major farm organizations. Farm safety, however, is not a week's job. It is watchfulness and carefulness day in and day out, 365 days a year. It has been truly said that the farmer is his own economist. He raises those commodities which find a favorable market and show him a return on his time and effort. That being so, the simple economics of accident prevention should have his attention and careful thought. Such an appalling bill to the Nation for injuries to its farmers indicates that we can't afford to get hurt. I urge everyone to adopt this slogan and live by it --- farm safely!

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